

Problems that keep us from Jesus, Part 3 - Acts 21:30-40 – August 30th, 2009

- This is part three of a series titled; "Problems that keep us from Jesus." We're uncovering several problems Paul faced in Jerusalem.
- We're discovering that Paul's problems then are our problems now. The problem with the problems is they keep people from Jesus.
- For those of us who have a saving knowledge of; and personal relationship with, Jesus, these problems can distance us from Jesus.

1. Traditions and customs (Verses 20b-21)

- Paul is accused of teaching the believing Jews to turn away from the law Moses, and living according to Jewish traditions and customs.

2. Appeasing and pleasing (Verses 22-24)

- They present Paul with a plan to pay the expenses of four men who had taken the Nazarite vow, hoping to appease his accusers.

3. Duplicity and partiality (Verse 25)

- The Jerusalem elders display both duplicity and partiality by having the Jews adhere to the Law and not requiring it from the Gentiles.

4. Compromising and cowering (Verse 26)

- It is my personal belief that Paul is sort of cowering and acquiescing to the Jerusalem elders by going through with their Nazarite vows.

5. Antagonism and opposition (Verses 27-29)

- The antagonistic Jews start a riot, and falsely accuse Paul of bringing Greeks into the Holy Place of the temple and defiling it.

6. Rejection and persecution (Verses 30-32)

30 The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut. 31 While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

- v30 The whole city is in an uproar with people running from all directions, and in the midst of this, Paul is dragged from the temple.
- v31 As they are actually trying to kill him, God has news reach the commander of the Roman troops that there is a full on riot in the city.
- v32 Upon hearing this he takes some officers and soldiers and runs into the riot, and when the rioters see them, they stop beating Paul.

- It's been said that wherever Paul went, one of two things happened; there was either a full on revival, or a full on riot, this time it's a riot.
- Sadly, this persecution against Paul, led to this Riot because of Paul, and rather than experiencing a revival he will experience rejection.
- What adds insult to injury is the elders don't do anything to support Paul, and they're the ones responsible for what's happened to Paul.

"They apparently did nothing to secure his release, nothing to speak on his behalf, nothing to appeal to the Jews of Jerusalem to give Paul fair play. They sent no one to the Roman authorities to assure the commander of the garrison that Paul was innocent of the charges leveled against him."

John Phillips "Exploring Acts" p. 428

- To make matters worse, we don't read anywhere that this crowd comes to Christ. Instead they reject Paul and the Christ he preaches.
- The irony in all of this is that Paul is being accused of rejecting the Jews, their sacred law, and the Holy Place of their Temple.
- Paul wasn't rejecting them, what he was rejecting was trusting in them as a basis for righteousness, which only comes through Christ.

7. Confusion and chaos (Verses 33-36)

33 The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done. 34 Some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another, and since the commander could not get at the truth because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks. 35 When Paul reached the steps, the violence of the mob was so great he had to be carried by the soldiers. 36 The crowd that followed kept shouting, "Away with him!"

- v33 The commander arrests Paul and orders that he be bound with two chains, then makes the mistake of asking what was going on.
- v34 The crowd erupts into chaos when they all shout their side of the story, so when he can't get the truth, Paul is taken to the barracks.
- v35-36 When Paul gets to the steps the mob is so violent the soldiers have to carry him as the crowd follows shouting; "Away with him."

"The shout *Away with him!* which pursued him as he was carried up the steps was the shout with which Jesus' death had been demanded not far from that spot some twenty-seven years before (Luke 23:18; John 19:15)."

F.F. Bruce

- This chaotic scene had to have been reminiscent of the confusion that surrounded Jesus' arrest, brutal beating and crucifixion.
- It's no wonder that as confused as the disciples were then, so too are these Jerusalem elders now, because Paul's life is on the line.

"But he was safe from their fury. The Lord has ways of rescuing his servants out of the most chaotic and perilous of circumstances."

Charles Spurgeon

1 Corinthians 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. KJV

8. Ignorance and disbelief (Verses 37-40)

37 As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, "May I say something to you?" "Do you speak Greek?" he replied. 38 "Aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the desert some time ago?" 39 Paul answered, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Please let me speak to the people." 40 Having received the commander's permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic:

- v37 As they're about to enter the barracks Paul asks if he can say something to him, and he responds by asking if Paul speaks Greek.
- v38 The commander asks Paul if he's the Egyptian who, a while back, started a revolt, and led four thousand terrorists into the desert.
- v39-40 Paul says he's a Jew and a Roman citizen. Receiving permission to speak, he silences the crowd, then, speaks in Aramaic.

- Here, it becomes abundantly clear that they are all as ignorant about what Paul has done as they are in disbelief of who Paul is.
- The irony in all of this is that this is exactly what those in Jerusalem did in their ignorance and disbelief in Who Jesus the Christ was.
- One commentator has drawn a number of parallels between the beloved Apostle Paul and the Savior Jesus Christ in Acts 20-21.

1. Like Jesus, Paul traveled to Jerusalem with a group of disciples.
2. Like Jesus, Paul had opposition from hostile Jews who plotted against his life.
3. Like Jesus, Paul made or received three successive predictions of his coming sufferings in Jerusalem, including being handed over to the Gentiles.
4. Like Jesus, Paul had followers who tried to discourage him from going to Jerusalem and the fate that awaited him there.
5. Like Jesus, Paul declared his readiness to lay down his life.
6. Like Jesus, he was determined to complete his ministry and not be deflected from it.
7. Like Jesus, Paul expressed his abandonment to the will of God.
8. Like Jesus, Paul came to Jerusalem to give something.
9. Like Jesus, Paul was unjustly arrested on the basis of a false accusation.
10. Like Jesus, Paul alone is arrested, but none of the other followers of Jesus.
11. Like Jesus, Paul heard the mob crying out, *Away with him!*
12. Like Jesus, the Roman officer handling Paul's case did not know his true identity.
13. Like Jesus, Paul was associated with terrorists by Roman officials.
14. In a way unique to most of us, Paul really did know *the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death* (Philippians 3:10).